

#5 – BUDGET REQUEST FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

I have reviewed the proposed budget of \$148,706 for the Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics. This budget represents a decline, since FY 2005, of 31% in operating expenses, 56% in capital expense and 41% in total budget excluding salaries and wages.

TOWN SEXTON: The Town Clerk has assumed the role of Town Sexton for the last three budgets. The cost of this operation has been \$17,500 and \$2,500 in the last two years. This amount was included in the First Selectman's budget, and, in FY2006, was primarily covered by a special appropriation. Because the First Selectmen usually does not want to use up a special appropriation for this purpose this causes difficulties. Consideration should be given to setting up a separate Town Sexton department with its' own budget in order to avoid this problem. It has not been included in this budget.

All of the environmental threats to the Center Street and Gilbertown cemetery will have been removed this fiscal year. The next step is to raise the fallen stones and stabilize them. This is the lowest cost, most cost effective next step for making a significant impact. The cost for the Center Street Cemetery is \$30,000 for this work next fiscal year. This amount has not been included in the Town Clerk's budget on the assumption that it will be included in the First Selectman's budget as usual.

OFFICE HOURS: The Town Clerk's office hours should be expanded to improve service to the public. I have spent some time trying to determine how to expand hours with the current staff and have been unsuccessful because of a number of considerations. Office hours could be increased to 9.00am to 4.00pm daily, if the part time Assistant Town Clerk position was increased to full time. The Comptroller's office estimates that the increased salary cost would be \$14,790. I have reviewed this proposal with the Human Resources Committee and they have agreed to recommend the extra staff and office hours. The increased salary cost has not been included in the proposed budget and must be added if the increase is approved

W. Derek Buckler 2/26/08 Tom Morone 2/26/08

Town Clerk Signature Date First Selectman Signature Date

To: First Selectman
Date: 2/25/2008
Re: FY2009 Proposed Budget – Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics

Introduction

Attached is a summary of the proposed combined budget for 2008/2009 for the office of the Town Clerk and Registrar of Vital Statistics. A maintenance budget for 2008/9 would be \$148,706 compared to \$144,272 for 2007/8 an increase of 3.1% largely due to salary increases. In addition, it is recommended that office hours be extended to 9.00am to 4.00pm in order to provide better public service. This will require an increase of one of the Assistant Town Clerk's from part time to full time at a salary cost of \$14,790. This amount must be added to the proposed budget if it is approved.

The Town Clerk's office has seen a number of major changes in operations and operating technology over the last few years. This has resulted in major cost reductions in those areas controlled by the office. As an example, compare the 2007/8 budget with the 2004/5 actual expenditure. Over this period, operating expenses have been reduced by 31%, Capital and other investments by 56% and the Total Budget, excluding salaries and wages, by 41%. Overall, the proposed budget is up by 2% because of salary increases.

These improvements have been achieved while eliminating the backlog of processed documents and bringing the Land Record and Map record books and Index books up to date each day. The Land Records are available to the public by computer, as are the maps. An initial name search capability is available.

A major problem, which needs attention, is the treatment of Minutes and Agendas. We do not comply with minimum state statutory mandates and cannot correct this problem with the resources currently available. This is likely to be an expensive omission if we are subjected to one of the random audit visits that are conducted by the Public Records Administrator. The proposed budget begins to address this issue beginning with prospective Minutes and Agendas and then working retroactively. This cannot be undertaken unless the additional resources requested are available.

Background

In the past, records management has been dismissed as a convenience to out of town professionals, and an annoying legal requirement of little, or no, value to Easton residents. However, this viewpoint ignores the reality of resident's interests. The people using the Town Clerk's office to review records include Attorneys, Title Searchers, Public Works, Planning and Zoning and other town departments and the public. Whatever their profession they all are working for the

benefit of current and future Easton residents. Any improvements benefit all Easton residents directly. People who buy animal licenses, sports licenses, marry, die, get buried; give birth, divorce; transfer property; seek Senior Tax Relief; register to vote, vote; seek FOI information; require JP services; require notary services; or require a myriad of other services are all residents seeking assistance. It is difficult to identify anything done in the Town Clerk's office that does not directly, or indirectly, affect Easton residents.

The major factors affecting the proposed budget are as follows:

1. Historically the Town has ignored a large part of the statutory obligations of the Town Clerk's office. Steps to clean up the office have reduced the budget, but the cost of assuming the neglected responsibilities has consumed part of the savings.
2. Our continuing efforts to conform to minimum statutory requirements
3. Our continuing efforts to correct the deficiencies of the past
4. The Union contract increase in staff compensation [3.25%]
5. The effort to upgrade operations and absorb the increased workload without a commensurate increase in staff level has reached a limit. An increase in Staff hours is needed so that the neglected areas of Minutes, Agendas and other documents can be addressed as required by State statute. We cannot meet the statutory requirements with the present people and other resources.
6. Maximizing vault space utilization to avoid the cost of a new vault
7. Assisting the operation and administration of the Elderly Tax Relief Program
8. Assumption of the responsibilities of Town Sexton
9. Upgrade to Vista based computer software in order to conform to Public Act 07-252

TOWN CLERK 2007-2008 BUDGET PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

More than six years ago, it was apparent that it was essential to clean up the chaos in the records in the Town Clerk's office. At the same time, it was recognized that the vault was approaching capacity and something had to be done to make better use of the existing capacity or a larger, expensive vault would have to be built. At that time, we started a long-term project to address these objectives. The initial focus of that effort has been the Land Records and Maps. This effort has made great progress and is ongoing. We can now start to address Public Act 07-252 as well as Minutes, Agendas and other documents and issues. The cost savings from Land Records largely fund the effort to address the neglected area of Minutes, Agendas and other documents. The current staff is largely consumed in managing the Land Records and Maps and daily operations.

In order to bring the general situation under control it was necessary to introduce a rule that required that on average a day's work be completed on average in one day. The absence of this rule in the past had resulted in the accumulation of a large backlog of unprocessed records, maps, minutes, agendas, cash, checks, and other materials. Since the budget did not provide for additional staff, the only way to proceed was to reduce office hours to the public. This situation continues to this day. The proposed increase in staff hours addresses this issue.

Status

I am pleased to report that the following progress has been made:

1. Proprietary ***Point of Sale*** software has been developed and made available to the town, at no cost, because the cost of commercial software was prohibitive. This provides a computer record of all transactions and has reduced the end of day account reconciliation from several hours to less than half an hour.
2. Proprietary ***Recording*** software has been developed for Land Records and made available to the town, at no cost, because the cost of commercial software was prohibitive. This software permits the efficient processing and numbering of all incoming Records.

3. Proprietary **Indexing** software has been developed for Land Records and made available to the town, at no cost, because the cost of commercial software was prohibitive. This software permits the efficient Indexing of all incoming Records and generates a format that can be processed directly by the Index Verifier and Auditor.

This software permits the in house production of archival Grantor, Grantee and Day Indexes as required by statute. This avoids the delay and expense of an external vendor.

4. A document processing protocol has been established that permits interaction with our external Index Verifier/Auditor by posting images of Land Records and a related index on an electronic bulletin board [i.e. via an ftp site].

All document processing is image based. This combined with the other changes described above has enabled the reduction in processing cost per document from approximately \$3.58 to less than \$0.50. Because documents are now transmitted to the Verifier/Auditor, electronically daily we have reduced handling, copying and mail delays and expenses. Documents are now in the Books and Index the same day compared to several weeks previously.

5. Proprietary **Marriage License** software has been developed and made available to the town, at no cost, because the cost of commercial software was prohibitive. This software permits the efficient production in real time of all Marriage Licenses, reduces the paper work and establishes a sortable, searchable database.
6. Proprietary **Civil Union** software has been developed and made available to the town, at no cost, because the cost of commercial software was prohibitive. This software permits the efficient production in real time of all Civil Union licenses reduces the paper work and establishes a sortable, searchable database.
7. Proprietary **Dog License** software has been developed and made available to the town, at no cost, because the cost of commercial software was prohibitive. This software permits the efficient production and numbering of all dog licenses and establishes a sortable, searchable database.
8. Proprietary Absentee Ballot software has been developed in conjunction with the Assistant Registrar of Voters.

9. All Records and Maps are now stored as images. These images are available for review, retrieval and printout in the Town Clerk's office. Public self-service in these areas has helped reduce the staff workload and allowed more to be done with the existing staff.
10. Unfortunately, we still must rely on a paper index to find Land Records. **Recent legislation [PA07-252] mandates the availability of an electronic search index for land records by 1/1/2009.** A Proprietary computer based integrated electronic search index for **Records** and **Maps** has just been completed. The Land Record search index database is still incomplete. The book and page search capability covers all records. Currently the computer based name search can only go back to 1/1/2005. Further progress awaits an integrated database for the entire period. A computer based search index for **Maps** has been developed and covers all Land Record, Assessor and Street maps.
11. This office also provides space and support for the Tax Relief for the Elderly program. It employs proprietary software developed for the purpose.

Plans

The plan this year is as follows:

- Address the quality of Land Record indexing
- Expand the electronic search Land Record database
- Address the storage and archiving of the large backlog of Minutes, Agendas and other documents and the handling of future documents of this type
- Address the issue of a name search and retrieval index program for Records
- Address the space issue.
- Address the issue of Disaster Recovery

Disaster Recovery

Disaster recovery is an issue that should be addressed for the Town Hall as a whole. In the Town Clerk's office Land Records and Maps are imaged, and are stored in the computer and offsite, and microfilmed and stored off site. In the Town Hall, the server is not protected. A fire or other disaster could easily eliminate all of the records.

Minutes, Agendas and Other documents are more difficult to handle.

The Town Clerk's office is very space constrained. The vault houses most Records, Maps and Minutes and Agendas. However, large numbers of documents are stored outside of the vault in lateral filing cabinets. In the event of fire, or other disaster, they would probably be irretrievably lost.

A study of space utilization in the Town Hall is needed urgently. Currently we house public computers in the vault because of lack of alternative. A practice that has been forbidden by the Public Record Administrator. A random audit is likely to uncover this violation at some expense to the town. High value space is presently being used for storage that probably could be better done elsewhere, freeing up the space for higher value use. In the Town Clerk's office, the shape of the space compounds the problem.

Computers and Space

Currently two computers are provided in the vault for public use to view images of Land Records and one to view Maps. The process of educating the public to use computers and not the archival paper records takes time. It is complete for Maps with essentially no public requests to see the original map. It is at a much earlier stage for Land Records. People still refer to the paper books and will continue to do so until we get an electronic name search capability, and they become comfortable with computer access.

In order to separate people and records to maximize the use of the vault space a long-term weaning process will be required to ensure that people voluntarily transfer to computer search, access and retrieval. The process, in essence, requires computer access to be very convenient compared to direct access to the paper records. Ultimately, the objective is to use the public space in the vault for record storage, and provide public computer access to the records outside of the vault.

Wide bed copying machine

Last year a wide-bed copying machine was purchased for copying, printing and scanning maps. This has been very successful in all operational modes. It is in wide spread use by the public and town hall departments. It has eliminated the need, cost and time of sending out maps for scanning and made the maps available to the public within a day of receipt. On the downside, most of the town employees are not computer literate and consequently, most of the operational load has fallen on the Town Clerk's department, most of it on the Town Clerk personally. In addition, there has been a much larger than anticipated burden on supplies, since paper and ink has to be bought to print or copy the

maps. Fortunately, some additional revenue comes to the town, but all of the additional expenses are accrued by the Town Clerk's office. DPW and P&Z are also extensive users. The additional cost of materials of more than \$1,000 has been absorbed by the Town Clerk's budget, as has the large amount of additional labor required.

Summary

The proposed budget continues the long term clean up program and maintains all operations the same, except for conforming to the new legislation [PA 07-252] requiring an electronic Land Record search index.

It also recommends increasing the Assistant Town Clerk to full time in order to expand the office hours to 9.00am to 4.00pm. Since the office will not close for lunch, this will be the longest office hours in the town hall. The cost is not included in the budget but must be added if approved.

TABLE 1 -TOWN CLERK BUDGET 2008/9

	New Account Number	Account Title [Town Clerk Budget]	2004-05 Actual [\$]	2005-06 Actual [\$]	2006-07 Budget [\$]	2007-08 Budget [\$]	2008-09 Request [\$]	Change [\$]	Change [%]	Note	Old Account Number
Salaries and Wages	01101000-5125	Town Clerk Salary	41,916	47,023	49,863	57,919	59,657	1,738	3.00	1	100-01-11-0101
	01101000-5106	Asst Clerk I Wages	28,346	30,297	31,759	33,525	34,615	1,090	3.25	2	100-01-11-0102
	01101000-5117	Asst Clerk II Wages	16,073	16,718	17,694	18,678	19,285	607	3.25	3	100-01-11-0103
	01101000-5113	Longevity	0	0	200	200	200	0	0.00	4	100-01-11-0113
	01101000-5117	Part Time Wages	0	0	0	0	0	0		5	100-01-11-0117
Operating Expenses	01102000	Services And Fees	24,106	14,269	12,000	12,000	12,000	0	0.00	6	100-10-11-02
	01104000	Material & Supply	7,105	7,424	9,250	9,250	9,250	0	0.00	7	100-01-11-04
	01106000	Employee Education	1,169	813	700	700	700	0	0.00	8	100-01-11-06
	01108000	Maintenance & Repair	2,468	1,591	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	0.00	9	100-01-11-08
Capital Investment	01125000	Other	11,073	7,018	7,000	10,000	10,000	0	0.00	10	100-01-11-25
	01135000	Capital Outlay	13,808	5,144	1,000	0	1,000	1,000	-	11	100-01-11-35
Total Budget			146,065	130,297	131,466	144,272	148,706	4,434	3.07	12	
Summary	Salary & Wages		86,335	94,038	99,516	110,322	113,756	3,434	3.11%	13	
	Operating Expenses		34,848	24,097	23,950	23,950	23,950	0	0.00%	14	
	Capital & Other Investment		24,881	12,162	8,000	10,000	11,000	1,000	10.00%	15	
	Total Budget Excluding Salaries		59,730	36,259	31,950	33,950	34,950	1,000	2.95%	16	
2007/08 & 2008/09 Compared to 2004/5	Salary & Wages		100%			28%	32%			17	
	Operating Expenses		100%			-31%	-31%			18	
	Capital & Other Investment		100%			-60%	-56%			19	
	Total Budget Excluding Salaries		100%			-43%	-41%			20	
	Total Budget		100%			-1%	2%			21	
	Town Budget [%]		100%			19%				22	
	Town Budget [\$]		29,917,023			35,583,288				23	

SEE ATTACHED NOTES FOR DETAILS

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TABLE 1 - TOWN CLERK BUDGET 2008/9 - NOTES

NOTE #	
1	3% increase per Comptroller [estimated]
2	3.25% increase per Union contract
3	3.25% increase per Union contract.
4	Longevity payments began in 2007.
5	Part time person required to cover for vacations and sickness. Unchanged from last year. \$0 budgeted
6	No change from last year
7	No change from last year
8	No change from last year
9	No change from last year
10	Continuation of Long term restoration program - Used to correct historical record problems, Land Records, Maps, Minutes and Ager
11	\$1,000 for software updates; replace antiquated office furniture
12	Proposed Budget.
13	Salary and Wages only, per Union contract and Human Resources
14	Services & Fees, Materials & Supplies, Employee Education, Maintenance only
15	Capital and Other Investment
16	All expenses except Salaries and Wages
17	Salary and Wages change since 2004/5. Includes increase of Assistant to Full time
18	Operating Expenses change since 2004/5
19	Capital and Other Investments change since 2004/5
20	Decrease in Total Budget excluding salaries and wages since 2004/5
21	Change in Total Budget since 2004/5 - includes increased work load absorbed and wage and salary increases
22	In 2007/8 compared to 2004/5 the Town Clerk's budget was down 1%, compared to an increase of 19% in the Town Budget. At
23	Town Budget for 2004/2005 [actual] and 2007/2008[actual]

**Town of Easton
Town Clerk Department
2008-2009 Proposed Capital Budget**

Capital Project	Description	Need	2007-08 Cost	Total Cost
#1	<u>Computer Update & Acquisition</u>	Essential		
	One Computer ¹		\$1,445	
	One Monitor ²		\$2,000	
	Total		\$3,445	\$3,445
#2	<u>Software Update</u> ³	Essential	\$1,000	\$1,000
	<u>Total Capital</u>			<u>\$4,445</u>

Notes

- 1 Additional public capacity as part of program to wean from vault
- 2 Higher resolution to remove eyestrain. Landscape view to combine map and document viewing.
- 3 Commercial software in use must be updated as required

Town of Easton
Town Clerk Department
2008-2009 Future Capital Projects

Five Year Estimate of Future Capital Project Requests
 Estimated Schedule of Project Costs by Year

Account Number & Project Description	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Add one computer system	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
Replace all systems			\$20,000		
Replace antiquated office furniture		\$5,000			
Software updates	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Unforeseen	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000